

Attracting Wood Ducks To Your Property

*"One of Alabama's most
colorful waterfowl"*

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One of our most colorful species of waterfowl, the wood duck, can readily be found throughout the eastern portion of the United States. In the late 1800's, this species was a victim of over-harvesting and loss of habitat. The harvesting of old-growth bottomland forests, as well as tremendous harvest pressure left wood duck populations at dangerously low levels at the beginning of the 20th century.

During the 1930's and 40's, an effort to save the wood duck was launched. Hunting regulations were put into place and artificial nesting boxes were introduced. These efforts proved to be highly successful, and today the wood duck populations continue to grow.

Wood ducks nest in tree cavities, but they are not able to excavate their own cavities. They have to depend on woodpeckers and squirrels to create a suitable nesting spot. With the older cavity-rich

trees becoming harder to find, natural cavities are sometimes scarce. Fortunately, wood ducks readily adapt to artificial nest boxes.

As early as February, wood ducks may begin looking for suitable nesting spots. Boxes should be placed along the edge of creeks, rivers, ponds, and lakes. Nesting boxes may be placed on a pole in water or on dry ground. If planning to place it over water, be certain that the nesting box is located above the high water mark. If plans include mounting your box over dry land, place a predator guard around the pole to prevent animals such as raccoons and snakes from destroying the nest. (See *diagram 2*.)

When constructing a box (*diagram 1*), rot resistant woods such as cypress or cedar are recommended. The entrance/exit hole should be four inches wide and oval or circular shaped. Hardware cloth or wire mesh on the

inside under the hole will assist the hatchlings in exiting the box. Wood ducks cannot carry nesting material, so it must be provided. Wood shavings can be used as nesting material. It will help insulate the eggs during incubation.

A successful nesting box program will require yearly maintenance. Boxes should be inspected each year during January and February. They should be repaired, and unsuitable nesting material can be replaced. Predator guards should be checked annually to ensure the safety of the nesting hen and eggs.

Wood ducks are wonderful creatures and will add grace and beauty to any wetland landscape. Do what you can to help continue the efforts of providing a home for these special birds.

For more information about wood ducks contact Ben Davis, Wildlife Biologist at P.O. Box 932, Citronelle, AL 36522 or call 251-866-5015. 🦆

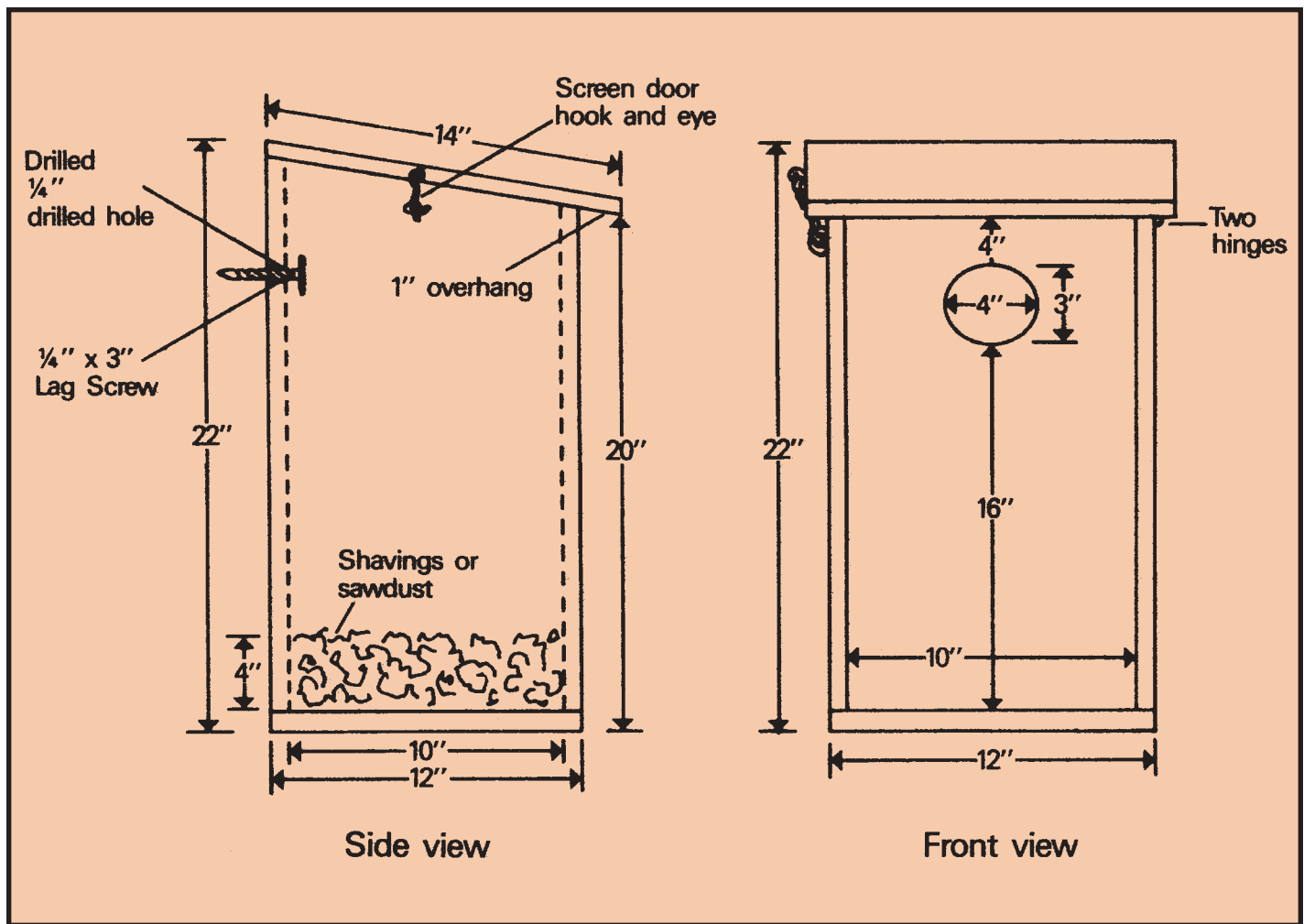


Diagram 1 - Materials needed

for constructing Wood Duck Nesting Box:

- 1-inch x 12-inch rough cypress, redwood, or treated pine lumber (about 9-1/2 feet)
- 3/8-inch x 3-1/2-inch hanger bolt
- 3/8-inch wing nut and washer
- 3-inch lag screw and flat washer (if hanger bolt is not used)
- 2-inch screen door hook and eye
- Two small hinges
- 1/4-inch hardware cloth
- Shavings or sawdust

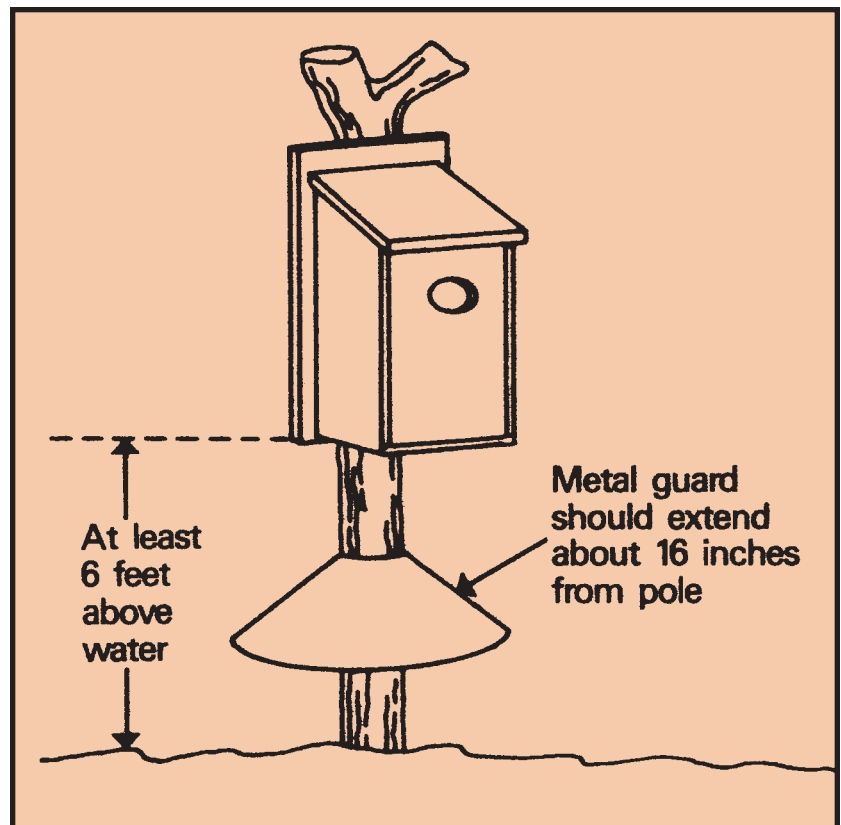


Diagram 2 - Nesting boxes may be placed on a pole in water or on dry ground. If placing it over water, be certain the nesting box is above the high water mark. If mounting on dry land, place a predator guard around the pole.